

IMPRESSIONS & REFL3CTIONS 3

Outcome of a Tour of the MIT Media Lab and Dinner at the MIT Stella Room

on February 16, 2012 as part of the

RCC/MIT SPURS-Humphrey Fellows Collaboration

by Program Participants from Roxbury Community College (RCC)

Edited by: Jose A. Alicea, Ed. D.

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The following short literary pieces by students, faculty and staff members from Roxbury Community College (RCC) result from a tour of the MIT Media Lab and dinner at the MIT Stella Room on February 16, 2012 as part of the RCC/MIT SPURS-Humphrey Collaboration.

RCC/MIT-SPURS Collaboration

Mission:

To collaborate in a joint program to benefit students, faculty, fellows and scholars of RCC and MIT within the context of the city /regional planning disciplines.

Goals:

1. To expose RCC honor students to the international/global perspective within their RCC major through meaningful interactions with the SPURS/Humphrey Fellows.
 - RCC's Honors students gain insight into the work of the SPURS/Humphrey Fellows by participating in key lectures, field trips, and social engagements that would support their academic and professional pursuits at RCC.
2. To expose the SPURS/Humphrey Fellows to RCC honor students' and their diverse experiences as American, immigrant and international students within the American higher education system.
 - SPURS/Humphrey Fellows participate in key Honors classroom activities as guest speakers, offer college-wide lectures, as well as provide mentorship in RCC Honors projects related to their field of study. The Fellows can utilize RCC students and faculty as resources when exploring themes related to American planning.
3. To engender an educational environment that attempts to bridge the gap between community colleges and 4-yr. undergraduate/graduate institutions in order to view each other as resources that could further their academic initiatives.

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Eric Moskowitz,
The Boston Globe Magazine

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24 HOURS IN KENDALL SQUARE

10:27 A.M.

MIT MEDIA LAB

Beyond what could be the most crowded bike rack I've ever seen, I find myself in front of the fabled MIT Media Lab. There are 26 research groups in this complex – which like a product of a Steve Jobs fever dream – each one centered on an innovative faculty member or senior research scientist and a handful of enterprising grad students.... (T)he lab isn't open to the public. Turns out there's a downside to being considered a world class-temple of innovation: people can't help but wander in off the street. And sometimes they steal stuff – valuable, top-secret, mesmerizing stuff.

10:52 A.M.

SOMEWHERE IN THE MEDIA LAB

The lab spaces, which deliberately bleed into one another to encourage collaboration, are passing by in a blur of Technicolor high tech. Near a display of cereal boxes and smart phone price scanners, I get to play with the I/O Brush, a beefy paintbrush equipped with camera and sensors. It lets children brush items in real life – an Elmo doll, say – and then apply their colors, patterns, and textures to a digital canvas.

While I try not to break anything, (our guide) points out a screen that can be used for controlling a computer with gestures that grew out of its creator's advisory work on the movie *Minority Report*. Next to it, I see what looks like a foosball table left in the hands of Dr. Frankenstein, reengineered and encircled by wires and lights.

Down the hall, we come upon a plush teddy bear concealing a sophisticated robot. Nurses have tested it for therapy and data collection. Want to tell whether a kid has fever? Just ask her to hug the bear. (It's called a *Huggable*, of course.)

We reach the lab of...the composer of the robot opera *Death and the Powers* and an invention whose technology-assisted instruments have been used by Yo-Yo Ma, Peter Gabriel, and Prince. A grad student is putting the final stitches on a side project: a denim skirt with a huge built-in iPod speaker.

Two doors down...another grad student is cramming for an afternoon presentation to National science Foundation grant writers. The Calgary native is as animated talking about the everyday miracles in his Kendall world as in his own work (on 3-D printing), right down to the dorm washing machine that texts him when his load is done. "In Canada, it's completely different in terms of technology being integrated around us," (he) says. Somerville, too," I tell him.

Excerpt from
24 HOURS IN KENDALL SQUARE
 by Eric Moskowitz
Boston Globe Magazine, Feb.26, 2012

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**RCC/MIT
Fellows
Visit
MIT
Media
Lab**



Sharé-Leigh Arneaud-Bernard
Student
My Reflections

Going to MIT for the second time I thought that the experience would be similar to the one that I had encountered previously. However I was proven wrong as we were given a tour of their media lab. Even though my field of study is Biological Science, it was both surprising and interesting to see how man has developed the necessary tools and technologies to both enhance and benefit themselves, for example: the prosthetics section of the Lab. Furthermore, as a member of the Garden Club at RCC, I was curious at the way they were developing their designs that would help prevent Global Warming and promote energy efficiency.

The "Occupy Wall Street" discussion was engaging as it allowed me to listen to diverse ideas and responses to a topic that is not only internationally discussed but also is a very fragile topic. Professor Wampler's invention of winterization tent for the Occupy Movement was intriguing and I would have loved to see a model / make of it.

I hope that I can meet again with the MIT-SPURS fellows to discuss more ways in which we can shape and develop our communities for the future. Thank you for such a great opportunity to represent my college and student body.

Venisa Dodi
Political Science
MIT Paper

On February 16 2012, my Political Science teacher Randall Foote and a few of my classmates gathered at the train station for a program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). When we got there, a young man gave us a tour of the newly built extension. He said it was built by the Japanese in 2009. It was also the building which contained all their latest projects. He showed us a section where they made prosthetic legs for people who were physically disabled. He said those projects were being tested on and at some point they would be taking to the hospitals to give to patients who needed them.

Another section we went to was where they made all the machines for drama. He said the students had built machines that would perform the actions of the characters when they performed on stage. There was a section in which he talked about cars. He said they made cars which could be folded and the purpose for making those cars was to help create some space so that people can move freely without having to deal with traffic or crowded areas. The same

applied to electric scooters. He said they sent the model to one of the European countries and in 2013 it will be sold to the general public.

Furthermore, we talked about Occupy Boston. We talked about how in Occupy Boston there was no leader who spoke for the whole group and so the government could not do anything about their request. Also the Occupy movement had many individual problems instead of speaking as a group. As a result it was difficult for the government to reach out to every single one of them. Others at the meeting argued that if it was done in a more organized fashion maybe they would have been heard.

Lastly, we talked about Roxbury Community College collaborating with MIT so that the students can have a chance of going to a school like that. Most students have the ability to go to one of those Ivy League schools like MIT, but usually they see the schools as a place that is higher than their standards. If RCC can have workshops with MIT and other schools like that, maybe students at RCC would be more interested in schools like that. It will also encourage the teachers to work harder than they are already doing to better prepare the students for such schools.

Dana Francisco Miranda

The Trip to MIT and the Occupy Movement

The trip to MIT's Media Lab was an informative overview of the advancements and experimentation done not only in a wide range but also at greater and intensive levels of developments. Seeing in one building the cohesive development of myriad technologies presented succinctly the goals of MIT for effective advancement. Our guide, Praveen Subramani was also quite informative on all the specific research done outside his own.

Transitioning to the Occupy Movement discussion, although late, the discussion over the motives of the Occupy moment and the political effectiveness of civil disobedience prompted intelligent discussion. My one complaint being that the actual discussion was actually quite short and the small group discussions were also not given enough time to analyze in depth the cause and effect that the Occupy Movement will have on politics worldwide, let alone American politics and the upcoming elections.

Lee Perry

Extra! Extra! Extra!

It was such an honor to be included with a group of invited students, on this tour of one of the leading institutions of innovation in the world (MIT Media Lab). It was a privilege to participate. I thoroughly enjoyed traveling and conversing with professors, that I will either work with in the future, or will seek advice from on my educational journey.

Our guide was very friendly, which was one of the primary reasons for so many smiles before the tour. The building is very distinctive with its mesh exterior. With all the constant activity

within the building, some of us discussed and questioned our tour guide as to the acoustics, as we were impressed with the overall quiet unobtrusive environment of the structure's interior.



Seeing all of the current projects was just inspiring; real life images that fueled my imagination. Many of the exhibits we saw were down to earth: the prosthetics lab, the medical diagnostic mirror, water laser, 3D printer, and children's ideas in fabrication of circuitry in jewelry. It was encouraging to see useful science coming from such a source, and observing projects in different stages of development, such as the urban transport vehicle, which was so exciting because it was covered in the local news less than three weeks before the tour!

A good learning point for me was an understanding that no one technology is dominant. There is a necessity for an eclectic group of people to collaborate on solving very complex issues. Teamwork among the scientists and combining the sciences is the key to problem solving. My reaction to this inclusion with the honor students and the innovative work that I saw on display is to simply attempt to excel and pursue excellence!

At the occupy symposium, I was able to present my personal observations to the panel which elated me. It made me proud to be able to add some substance to the discussion. Learning about MIT's involvement in assisting the occupy movement in technical terms was another surprise. We were well received; our views were welcomed, and the food was excellent.

Events like this just motivate me to use my skills to create, and to problem-solve in my own community. I look forward to being involved in more events like this. It was a very worthy and educational activity that needs to be continued well into the future.

Thank you for including me in this valuable experience.

Marvell S. Shay

What I got out of the seminar, and still thinking about is how occupy Boston was so peaceful and why occupy Oakland was so violent. I think the reason for this was that the City of Boston had the support of its mayor and Oakland didn't. But one of the things that intrigued me the most was the tent that MIT architecture professor Jan Wampler, who Skyped in to let us know about this tent and how it was to help keep the occupiers warm during the winter, but he never got the opportunity to do this because the Courts had ordered occupiers to leave Dewey Square. This was a very informative session and I hope that Roxbury Community College and M.I.T. will continue with this dialogue in the future.



Jose A. Alicea, Ed. D.
 Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
 RCC/MIT Fellows Program Coordinator
 Roxbury Community College (RCC)

Nuggets from the semester kick-off event at MIT on February 16, 2012

- 16 RCC students and seven faculty/staff members participated. The Media Lab Tour was great! RCC Students and faculty were amazed at the modern designs everywhere: Tech clothing, ultra modern vehicle designs, robotic limbs, smart furniture, inter-active belts, and 3-D printers. We had both a virtual and real ball. The fabrication labs made us feel as if in a toy land. The tour guide, Praveen Subramani, was a grad student in the ultra-modern vehicle area; he was very knowledgeable and made the cascade of images, data and information accessible and fun. We walked and walked and talked and took many pictures and videos. This was a memorable event that has moved each of us to imagine.
- Dinner was excellent! The steak tips were just like I enjoy them, marinated, medium rare over heavily spiced baked potato slices. The salad was fresh and abundant with a healthy balsamic dressing - garden cucumbers, cherry tomatoes and exotic lettuce. Roasted green beans with olive oil over roasted cherry tomatoes, yum. The breads were fresh and light-I enjoyed the rolls with walnuts, cranberries and raisins and a bit of natural butter. Drinks included bottled water and sodas; I drank a coke-refreshing. I was tempted by the cake with white icing, but I resisted.
- The presentation on the "Occupy Wall Street Movement" was short and not as far reaching as I had expected. We did not delve into the reasons and issues that propelled and fueled the Movement, namely income inequality. We focused more on the organizational aspects and the global impetus of social media. Luckily, we had previous access to Atul Pokharel's report, which really uncovered many of the aspects of the Movement not presented in the media. His approach to the presentation was a conversation over dinner, which elicited great responses. I was particularly impressed by the level of analysis and cogent arguments presented by the RCC students. RCC professors expressed their pride in our students. First time participants actually seemed surprised at the RCC students' expressive abilities; they didn't surprise me or the other veterans; we are used to it.
- During the break-out session into small groups, I engaged in conversation with MIT professors and SPURS fellows, who were more interested in what the RCC students were thinking. We discussed further the underlying issues at the root of the Movement and vowed to act locally to change economic relationships that lead to income inequality, in keeping with the planning tradition of analysis and action.
- **For further exploration:** We need to design a joint RCC/MIT course as a stepping stone to the planning profession. The concept is to design seminars in Planning 101, as part of a Community Organizing Institute at RCC. It was noted that RCC students had no

basic course work in research study or methods, although the required English Composition II class is steeped in mostly bibliographic research.

MIT Professors Judith Tandler and Bish agreed to pursue this avenue further. A course that explores qualitative methods, such as interviews, surveys, observation and other anthropological methods would be a good start, especially if partnered with the Intro to Statistics class now offered. Interestingly, the Community Organizing Institute was until twenty years ago run by MIT Fellow Chuck Turner in Roxbury just one street behind the RCC campus. I graduated from this Institute and embarked upon a community organizing career that took me to the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) and on to MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

Bruce Brender
Professor, STEM, RCC

Hello Jose:

Thank you for the opportunity to visit the MIT Media Lab and to participate in the dinner and after-dinner discussion of the Occupy Wall Street movement's political impact.

I can only second the astute comments made by many RCC students and community colleagues. The tour had a surreal yet practical quality to it: You could "eat your own face" by posing for a hologram, then having the image etched by a 3-D printer into chocolate. Practically, this has been applied to plastic photolithography in constructing prefabricated buildings, as well as chess pieces.

About the robot opera others have mentioned: I can't critique it thoroughly, since my hearing is not what it once was, but the visuals were striking, with robots and humans following each other about, apparently communicating easily with each other.

I would like to mention that our MIT graduate student guides were very helpful, patiently answering all our questions, and pointing out intriguing work going on in the open workstations and interdisciplinary areas. Their final service was to conduct us to a welcome meal.

The tasty buffet provided RCC students and community fellows to break bread with MIT faculty, graduate students and fellows in a wide-ranging discussion about the significance of the Occupy movement in the context of the Arab Spring and subsequent revolutions; the consensus was that these phenomena were a hopeful turning point toward democracy. I look forward to ongoing meetings with progressive MIT faculty, fellows and staff.

Thank you again.

Reflections on RCC/MIT Collaboration

Randy Foote

Professor of Political Science, RCC

Once again it was a good dinner, of course, after an excellent tour of MIT facilities.

I brought six students from my Political Science class to the kick-off dinner which focused on the Occupy Movement and the Arab Awakening, both of which have been topics in my class. As in my other courses, I emphasize political participation and how it works both in the US and abroad. This discussion was very informative for the students and deepened their understanding of these issues. However, I think that the discussion period should have been longer, to allow for more depth.

Perhaps we should forego the tour part of these dinners and focus on in depth discussions, whether as a part of the presentation or as a part of the break-out period after the presentation. I fear that we are only scratching the surface, both for RCC students and for MIT Fellows -- as well as for our respective faculties.

This partnership has the possibility of becoming an important adjunct to my Political Science and US Government courses. I envision utilizing it to an even greater degree in the future, if we can find a way to dig in a bit deeper. Atul Pokharel suggested for this Spring that MIT and RCC students could work in co-ordination with a rejuvenated Occupy Boston movement in some capacity. This would be worthwhile to follow up on, if Atul is still willing – and if the Occupy Boston movement springs back to life in a public manner.

I believe that we are at a crossroads where we need to determine where this program needs to go, rather than being a one-off dinner (nice though it may be) once a semester. We need more follow-up, which is the responsibility of the respective faculties to pursue.

RCC-MIT Collaboration Continues: Semester Three

Nasreen Latif

Professor, Social Science and Management, RCC

It was nice to visit the MIT Media Lab, where high tech meets low tech. Likewise, there was a good presentation by a good company and good conversation. I look forward to organizing and having more SPURS/Humphrey Fellows and MIT/ SPURS faculty presentations on urban environmental issues and at the community service work day at RCC on April 21.

Alfonsina Minchella
Professor, Management Science Department, RCC

On February 16th I was privileged to tour the MIT Media Lab along with my RCC colleagues and RCC students. It was a fascinating experience and I came away with a sense of awe. I saw this in the faces of the students as well as we observed the various work areas where products were being developed that would impact our future as well as that of future generations. Praveen Subramani, a Research Assistant, who conducted the tour, answered questions as we walked around the amazing building.

The evening continued with a sumptuous dinner where we were joined by the fellows in the SPUR-Humphrey program. The presentation by Atul Pokharel on his paper “The Occupy Movement” was excellent and so was the dialogue that followed. RCC students made comments and asked questions. They broke up into groups with the fellows for further discussion. We met various professors in the program and exchanged ideas. I thoroughly enjoyed the evening and better yet when I encountered some of the students the next day they were still glowing from the experience.

Impressions and Reflections from RCC MIT Media Lab Tour and Occupy Discussion
Robert P. Stevens
Adjunct Professor, Humanities, RCC

My impressions of the RCC/MIT SPURS collaboration continue to be positive. Our most recent visit to the MIT campus featured a tour of the school’s famed Media Lab showcasing the school’s leadership in creative thinking and engineering. I’m sure the RCC students on the tour were duly impressed; I know I was.

I was also happy to renew MIT acquaintances over dinner afterward. The program included a Skype call from an off-campus MIT professor who had advised Occupy Boston during its encampment downtown. Time constraints precluded in-depth discussion of the issues underlying the movement’s development. Nevertheless the format was fun, the food fantastic, and I think the RCC participants came away with a positive impression.

I hope the two institutions will continue to find ways to collaborate.

